WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A computer implemented method for automatically generating an optimized workforce schedule, comprising:

creating an initial workforce schedule based on past schedules and employee attributes; and

refining the initial workforce schedule to generate an optimized workforce schedule based on the initial workforce schedule, forecasted demand, and employee preferences.

- 2. The method of claim 1, wherein creating an initial workforce schedule further comprises using a pattern recognition procedure to recognize past resource shift patterns for a particular employee position.
- 3. The method of claim 1, wherein employee attributes comprise an employee's skill set.
- 4. The method of claim 1, wherein employee preferences comprise an employee's desired number of hours.
- 5. The method of claim 1, wherein the refining step further comprises receiving a forecasted demand as input.
- 6. The method of claim 5, wherein the forecasted demand is for a single employee position.
- 7. The method of claim 5, wherein the forecasted demand is for multiple employee positions.
- 8. The method of claim 1, wherein the refining step further comprises generating an optimized workforce schedule based on resource availability.

- 9. The method of claim 1, wherein the refining step further comprises generating an optimized workforce schedule based on a predefined number of work hours per week for an employee.
- 10. The method of claim 1, wherein the refining step further comprises generating an optimized workforce schedule based on full time and part time employee availability.
- 11. The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving a modification to the optimized workforce schedule from a user.
- 12. The method of claim 11, wherein the modification is received via an input device configured to provide changes for a particular resource through a user interface.
- 13. The method of claim 12, wherein the input device is a mouse.
- 14. The method of claim 12, wherein the input device is a keyboard.
- 15. The method of claim 1, wherein the forecasted demand comprises multiple forecasts for a particular position.
- 16. The method of claim 1, wherein the resources selected for the initial workforce schedule are predefined.
- 17. The method of claim 1, wherein the resources selected for the initial workforce schedule are dynamically selected.
- 18. The method of claim 1, wherein the refining step further comprises:

creating an alternative schedule;

comparing the alternative schedule to the initial schedule to determine the optimal schedule; and

using the optimal schedule as the optimized workforce schedule.

- 19. The method of claim 1, wherein employee resources are located in a centralized pool of resources.
- 20. The method of claim 1, further comprising generating a color coded report to illustrate how closely the optimized workforce schedule is meeting the forecasted demand for a given position.
- 21. A system for automatically generating an optimized workforce schedule, comprising:

a scheduling server;

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an access device communicatively coupled with the scheduling server over a data communications network, the access device configured to allow a user to interact with the scheduling server;

a data storage area configured to store past schedules, forecasted demand, and employee attributes;

wherein the scheduling server creates an initial workforce schedule based on said past schedules, forecasted demand, and employee attributes; and

wherein the scheduling server creates an optimized workforce schedule based on user input via the access device.

- 22. The system of claim 21, wherein the access device and the scheduling server are at different locations.
- 23. The system of claim 21, wherein the scheduling server uses pattern recognition to recognize past resource shift patterns for a particular employee position.
- 24. The system of claim 23, wherein the scheduling server uses the past resource shift patterns to create the initial workforce schedule.
- 25. The system of claim 21, wherein the access device allows a user to adjust the forecasted demand for an employee position.

- 26. The system of claim 21, wherein the scheduling server is further configured to consider resources availability when creating the initial workforce schedule.
- 27. The system of claim 21, wherein the scheduling server is further configured to consider a predefined number of work hours per week for an employee when creating the optimized workforce schedule.
- 28. The system of claim 21, wherein the scheduling server is further configured to consider an employee skill set when creating the optimized workforce schedule.
- 29. The system of claim 21, wherein the scheduling server is further configured to consider full time and part time employee availability when creating the optimized workforce schedule.
- 30. The system of claim 21, wherein the access station comprises a mouse input device that allows a user to modify an optimized workforce schedule.
- 31. The system of claim 21, wherein the access station comprises a keyboard input device that allows a user to modify an optimized workforce schedule.
- 32. The system of claim 21, where in the forecasted demand comprises multiple forecasts for a particular position.
- 33. The system of claim 21, further comprising a report generator configured to provide a color coded report identifying how close the optimized workforce schedule is meeting the forecasted demand for a given position.
- 34. The system of claim 21, wherein the data storage area is coupled with a data server that is separate from the scheduling server.

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